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AUTHOR Parent, Ingrid
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ABSTRACT

This paper provides an update on the revision process undertaken to produce a new, relevant, and useful ISBD(S) (International Standard Bibliographic Description) standard for describing serial publications in both print and electronic formats. Highlights include: the concept of "integrating resource," i.e., a bibliographic resource that is added to or changed by means of updates that do not remain discrete and are integrated into the whole; modification of the definition for serial; determining what is a major title change; the process followed by the Working Group to revise the existing ISBD(S) standard; and the new concept of the ISST (International Standard Serial Title), including related issues that need to be addressed. The following benefits of developing an up-to-date serials standard are summarized in conclusion: increased opportunities for national and international record sharing; elimination of confusion for users and catalogers trying to identity and locate material; and use of one record for national library catalogs and reporting of the international ISSN (International Standard Serial Number) agency. (MES)

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Serials standards in convergence: ISBD(S) developments

Ingrid Parent
Chair, ISBD(S) Working Group
National Library of Canada
Ottawa, Canada

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Paper

I would like to give you an update of the serials revision process that we have undertaken to produce a new, relevant and useful ISBD(S) standard for describing serial publications in both print and electronic formats.

In taking on this project, and chairing the working group, I soon realized that this process was much more than simply revising an existing text every 5 or 10 years. Updating the standard is a challenge on its own. However, we have embarked on a process that has much wider and serious implications for the processing of serial publications in the world. We are intent on developing a descriptive standard that incorporates all the best and most relevant features of three major standards in international cataloguing: these three standards are ISBD(S), AACR (the Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules) and the ISSN standard. Representatives of all three standards have been involved in this revision process right from the beginning. We are truly on the verge of achieving something special and unique in the area of serials cataloguing during this time of transition and rethinking of our rules faced with the astounding growth of the Internet and the new formats of material. This is an opportunity for harmonization of various rules that will tremendously benefit not only cataloguers, but more importantly, the many users of bibliographic information for serials.

I have been using the term 'serials' and 'serials cataloguing' in my presentation so far. One of the first and major decisions of the ISBD(S) Working Group is that

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we subscribe to the revision proposed by the AACR community to expand the scope of seriality to cover a new concept of serial publication, namely a publication that is integrating in nature. As cataloguers we have already had to deal with some types of integrating publications such as loose-leaves but we have never really been satisfied with their definition nor in the way they are catalogued: are they monographs or serials? Now, with the Internet, we must deal with many new types of ongoing publications that are integrating: each 'version' supersedes the previous one. There are no successive issues. Therefore a new term was coined to describe this phenomenon, 'integrating resource'. Its definition is: A bibliographic resource that is added to or changed by means of updates that do not remain discrete and are integrated into the whole. Examples of integrating resources include resources that are loose-leaf for updating and Web sites.

The definition for 'serial' has also been modified. A serial is a continuing resource in any medium issued in a succession of discrete parts, usually bearing numeric or chronological designations and usually having no predetermined conclusion. Examples of serials include journals, magazines, electronic journals, directories, annual reports, newspapers, newsletters of an event and monographic series.

Together, serials and integrating resources constitute the concept of a Continuing resource, which is a bibliographic resource issued over time with no predetermined conclusion.

Continuing resource is therefore the generic term for the types of publication that will be covered by the ISBD(S). As a result the Working Group will propose that the title of the standard be changed from ISBD(S) to ISBD(CR). These definitions are still being discussed by the three communities, and not unexpectedly, there will still be some adjustments that will take place before agreement is reached. However, if we can't agree on some basic notions such as definitions, I feel we may as well pack up our papers and go into our own corners. It doesn't make sense to me to maintain differing definitions for the same publication type; some concessions will need to be made. Once the three communities agree on the definitions, it is very likely that there will not be any objections on the part of the international standards body, ISO, in accepting these new definitions.

The other major area of rapprochement is the challenging and time-consuming practices of title changes. I would like to state very clearly that the intention of our working group, which is endorsed by the other two standards groups, is to reduce the number of occasions where title changes occur and new bibliographic records need to be created. Most publishers probably don't understand cataloguers reasoning when deciding on what is a major title change for what to the publisher is still the same publication. We also have to consider the needs of the user and how the user approaches information retrieval. It is therefore a balancing act between reducing the number of title changes and thereby saving resources, with the need to improve access to information. But the trend in the revision process so far is to reduce the number of major title changes that would necessitate new bibliographic records, and default as much as possible to minor title changes which would be noted in the existing record.

The Working Group has considered various factors in determining what is a major title change. We still come back to counting the number of words at the beginning of the title, and have seemed to settle on the first five words as the important words to count to determine whether there has been a major title change. But why 5 words; why not 4 or 6? We have analyzed in great detail the

impact of using different numbers of words; we have also looked at this question by considering titles in languages other than English. Whatever rules we come up with must be appropriate for titles in all languages. We are developing an international standard, and we must ensure that the new ISBD will make sense to all users. While the three communities are still discussing what constitutes a major or minor title change, there is consensus that in case of doubt, consider the change to be minor. This is a change from current practice.

The Process

I would like to say a few words about the process we are following, the nature of the cooperation in this project, and the expected publication date for a new standard.

The ISBD(S) Working Group was created in 1998 by the IFLA Section on Cataloguing to revise the existing ISBD(S) standard which dates from 1988. The members of the group are mainly from the Cataloguing Section and come from all over the world. There is also a representative from the IFLA Section on Serial Publications and members from both the ISSN network and from the AACR community. It is a good and effective mix of people. All members are very willing to contribute their ideas and their time, and I thank them very much for their ongoing support for this project.

We have tried to meet at least once a year in addition to meeting during the annual IFLA conference. In November 1998, we met in Copenhagen and then in January this year, we met in San Antonio. A sub-group focusing on developing some new ways of dealing with title identification met in Ottawa in June -- I will say some more about this work in a few minutes.

We have met here in Jerusalem and have advanced the revision process. Much of the work is devoted to not only specific questions that I have raised earlier, but also to editing and clarifying both the text and examples in the existing standard wherever necessary. This task is very meticulously carried out by the editor of the standard, who is Edward Swanson.

In the meantime our partners in this harmonized revision process are also following a tight schedule and are trying to stay in synch with each other and with the ISBD(S) revision. The AACR community, as you probably know, relies on the Joint Steering Committee to guide its revision process. The JSC follows a pre-defined revision and consultation process. In spite of the best efforts of all concerned, the timing of the revision process is not entirely in step. Before we can make any final decisions on matters such as the definitions which we developed in San Antonio last January, we must wait for the next meeting of the JSC which is scheduled for mid-September. Similarly the directors of the ISSN national centres are also meeting this September to continue the revision process. The ISSN network hopes to reach consensus on rule revisions so that it can issue the new ISSN Cataloguing manual in early 2001.

The key meeting on which I am pinning my hopes that remaining differences among the three standards will be minimized or eliminated completely will be an invitational meeting of experts from the three communities to be held in November, most likely in Washington. The three standards need to be published without too much delay, and it is my expectation that this meeting of experts will be the last joint meeting of the three communities to resolve any outstanding issues. This is not to say that we will never speak to each other again; in fact the dialogue and the rapport that has been established over the last year must continue as standards evolve. However we will all be proceeding to

issue new standards, manuals and cataloguing rules. In the case of ISBD(S) or CR a final draft text will be prepared after the November meeting of experts. This draft will then be submitted to the ISBD Review Group, as John has described, for approval. It will then be distributed for world-wide review, as is the custom with IFLA standards and guidelines, for a set period of time, probably from four to six months. After the comments are received, they will be incorporated as appropriate, and the text will be submitted to the IFLA Section on Cataloguing for approval. If all goes well, the new edition of ISBD(CR) will be published soon after the IFLA conference in Boston next year. The process will have taken about 3 years, which some people may find to be rather slow, but which I think is very good for a revision of a major international standard done in cooperation with the other serials standards.

The ISST (International Standard Serial Title)

And now I would like to give you a brief description of a new concept that has emerged in the cataloguing and identification of serial titles. All of the activity currently underway with regard to harmonization has provided the impetus to move forward on a new initiative to facilitate international resource sharing -- the ISST or the International Standard Serial Title. As I mentioned before, there was a meeting two months ago in Ottawa of a sub-group of the ISBD(S) Working Group to further develop the concept of this ISST.

The idea was first raised last year by a few creative colleagues who believed that there must be a better way to uniquely identify a serial title, agreed to by all, and that was independent of any national cataloguing codes or network. The ISST would replace the existing key title in the ISSN network and ISBD(S) and most uniform titles established according to the AACR rules. The ISST along with the ISSN number would serve as the principal identifier for a continuing resource, and it would serve as the benchmark for determining when a title change requires a new bibliographic record.

I would like to mention the major players in developing this concept since they have put a lot of thought and time into exploring a new way of cataloguing serials. They are Jean Hirons and Regina Reynolds of the Library of Congress, Reinhard Rinn and Gunter Franzmeier from Germany, and Francoise Pellé and Alain Roucolle of the ISSN International Centre. And I think that their work, while far from being completed, demonstrates the type of thinking that we need in our profession as cataloguers and as users of bibliographic information. We must think 'outside the box' in terms of access to information and how we can facilitate the exchange of information. Again, in this time of great technological change and transition, we have the opportunity to propose new ideas to improve the description of serial publications so that information can be easily exchanged from country to country with minimal human intervention.

Because it is envisaged that the ISST would replace the key title and the uniform title as they currently exist, the implementation of the ISST represents a significant change in existing practice with far-reaching implications. Some of the issues that have surfaced in the discussions to date which need to be addressed include:

- the transition from the assignment of the key title to the assignment of the ISST, including workflow issues within ISSN centres, particularly the impact of the provisional assignment of ISSTs by cataloguers for subsequent authentication by ISSN centres;
- differences in the construction of key titles and uniform titles, particularly with corporate body qualifiers. The ISSN rules for establishing corporate

body qualifiers after a title differ from other national cataloguing codes, including AACR. However, I think we should keep in mind that most serial titles do not have corporate body qualifiers or additions to generic titles. In a recent study done by the ISSN International Centre on close to a million records in their Register, almost 70% of the key titles were so-called simple titles, with no qualifiers or which needed no construction. About 20% of the key titles have qualifiers and the remaining 10% are of the variety of non-unique titles that are followed by their issuing body. I think that sometimes we focus so much on our differences that we lose sight of the fact that most titles would not be treated differently by the three standards we are reviewing;

- differences in the choice of entry. Some cataloguing rules permit more entries under corporate bodies than others;
- transliteration differences. There are two widely used transliteration standards: the ISO standard and the ALA standard. This is not an easy difference to resolve and goes beyond the world of serials into all types of publications. A challenge for another group;
- the use of the ISSN Register as the international authority for ISST. This raises many questions about the accessibility and timeliness of this file of records. However, we are not discouraged, and the June meeting of the ISST subgroup confirmed that although there are major challenges to be overcome, the ISST concept offers significant benefits. Since the ISST will serve as a means of reaching international agreement on what constitutes a major title change and when to create a new record, this will lead to increased opportunities for record sharing internationally. In addition there are other benefits of the ISST:
- it provides stability, as only a change in the ISST would necessitate the creation of a new record;
- it increases efficiency, because for minor title changes, the title proper could be amended without the need to create a new record or change the ISST;
- it enables integration of national cataloguing practices with ISSN cataloguing -- one record would be able to fulfill both functions.

The ISST subgroup plans to further refine the concept with the objective of developing a comprehensive proposal which will include an action plan to address obstacles. Given the significant impact that the introduction of the ISST will have on existing practice, the ISST requires thorough assessment and consideration by the various serials standards communities. This will most likely not be done in time for the revision of the existing standards that is underway. However the ISST is part of our long-term strategic vision on the direction that serials cataloguing should take.

Conclusion

I have sketched out some of the issues that this revision process for ISBD(S) is trying to address. As I said at the beginning, this project has taken on many dimensions far beyond a simple revision of an existing text. However the benefits of developing an up-to-date, useful serials standard, in cooperation with the other standards groups, far outweigh the complexities of the process. These benefits are worth repeating:

- Increased opportunities for national and international record sharing which, in turn, reduces the cost of cataloguing (i.e. costs of original vs. derived cataloguing). There could be shared responsibility for ongoing maintenance of standards for serials and possibilities for joint problem-solving and new developments.

- Although the Internet has made world-wide access to library catalogues possible, having one set of rules to describe serial publications in those catalogues would eliminate confusion for users, and cataloguers, trying to identify and locate material.
- And finally, coming myself from a national bibliographic agency, NBAs could use one record for their national library catalogues and the same record for reporting to the international ISSN register. Currently, some national bibliographic agencies create two records (one for their national library catalogue and the other for the ISSN register); others report to the ISSN register using records created for their national library catalogues thereby, in some cases, violating some of the provisions in the ISSN rules for cataloguing.

Even though the work is complex and a challenge for everyone, the will to improve serials cataloguing standards is very evident from all the participants. If we can achieve some harmonization, we can take pride in the fact that we will have benefitted the entire information community.

Thank you for your attention.

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